**DOCUMENT RESUME**

ED 184 503 IR 008 091

AUTHOR Jackson, Eugene B.
TITLE "Three Grandes Dames" or Dayton, Ohio, as a Well-Spring of Women Special Librarians.
PUB DATE Jul 78
NOTE 21p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Females: History: *Librarians: Local History: Research Libraries: *Special Libraries
IDENTIFIERS *Ohio

ABSTRACT

This historical consideration of the role of women librarians in three Dayton special libraries centers on three figures: (1) Caroline W. Lutz, librarian of the General Motors Research Corporation from 1922 to 1956; (2) Hope Thomas, head librarian of the United States Air Force McCook Field Library in the mid-1940's; and (3) Emma Wedenbine, librarian of the National Cash Register Company Library from 1934 to 1964. Their careers are outlined and compared, and some historical background on their respective institutions is given. Sources for the chronology and an epilogue on historical research methodology are provided. (FM)

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# "THREE GRANDE DAMES"

# OR

# DAYTON, OHIO AS A WELL-SPRING OF WOMEN SPECIAL LIBRARIANS

by

Eugene B. Jackson

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"THREE GRANDES DAMES"
OR DAYTON, OHIO, AS A WELL-SPRING
OF WOMEN SPECIAL LIBRARIANS

By Eugene B. Jackson
University of Texas, Graduate School of Library Science
Austin, Texas 78712

If you ask a native of Southwestern Ohio "Why may Dayton be proud?" the usual answer is "It was the home of the Wright Brothers," although a number of alternate responses will be heard naming its relationship to Charles F. Kettering (inventor, engineer, millionaire, philanthropist, General Motors executive) or Col. John H. Patterson and Col. E. A. Deeds (innovators, industrialists, humanitarians, and founders of the National Cash Register Company). Few will mention the disastrous flood of 1913...

Special librarians should answer the question, "It is where Caroline W. Lutz, Hope Thomas, and Emma Wedenbine spent much or all of their years as outstanding special librarians." These women had long, productive careers in libraries founded by or related to the above men extending from the late 1910's to nearly 1950 (in one instance), and into the mid-1950's and mid-1960's in the other two.

Taking them up alphabetically, CAROLINE LUTZ graduated from Wayne State University, and also attended Ohio State University and University of Dayton. She was born in Dayton, one of five children in a family of German descent. She worked briefly for a company in Waterford, Connecticut. Returning to Dayton, she began in 1917 at the library of the National Cash Register Company as Assistant Librarian. (The NCR Chronology attached shows that Library was founded by Col. Patterson in 1893 and Mr. George Shortill was the librarian when she began work there.)* Note that Emma Wedenbine became a Clerk-Typist in that same Library in 1922. Miss Lutz left NCR in 1923, and by October 1, 1923 was the first librarian of the General Motors Research

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*NOTE: Emphasis has been given to using primary sources by contemporaries of the biographees. Unless otherwise specified, NCR (earlier, National Cash Register) Library information is from Emma M. Wedenbine, "Memorandum #1 - The NCR Library," [12 September, 1977] or clippings from NCR Factory News provided by Dr. H. Eugene Kneiss [22 September, 1977]. Similarly, information relating to General Motors Research Laboratories and predecessor companies is from T. A. Boyd to Dr. Paul Chena [13 May 1977] or Boyd to the author [27 August 1977, November 9, 1977], or interviews by the author, 1956 to 1965. Finally, information relating to Wright Field Reference Library and related organizational entities are from Martha J. Fitzgerald Yowler to the author [31 July 1977, 21 August 1977, 8 November 1977], U.S. National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, to Yowler [16 August 1977], Dr. Joe W. Kraus to the author [1 November 1977], and interviews by the author, 1946-1950. Further detailing of information sources is found at the end of the narrative.

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Corporation. The company was founded about 1919 by Mr. Kettering, in succession to the Research Division of the Dayton Metal Products Company that itself had been founded in 1916 by Mr. Kettering, Col. Deeds, and the Talbots--another famous Dayton family.

Caroline Lutz moved to Detroit in 1925, with the official establishment date of the activity there being August 2. Clearing up previous discrepancies in the record, we learned from Thomas A. Boyd, then research chemist of the Corporation and later the biographer of Mr. Kettering, that this August 2 entity consisted mainly of the Dayton corporation's staff plus some elements from the Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company (DELCO)--the first company founded by Mr. Kettering, and earlier sold to W. C. Durant and forming one of the original building blocks of the present General Motors Corporation--and the GM Experimental Department, Detroit, which had been set up in 1911 at the suggestion of Arthur D. Little Company.

The GMR Library was now on the 10th floor of a GM-owned building right under the Metallurgical Foundry (and some of the Library's classic monographs exist with stains from overhead spills), and by 1928 it was being heavily used by other GM Divisions. A printed book catalog was prepared about then and distributed to facilitate such use of the books and periodicals. The massive collection of shop manuals and parts catalogs for United States and foreign automobiles and trucks was already underway, and it was not long before Miss Lutz originated the "shingling-up" of Engineering Index cards for periodical references as an information-dissemination medium on a regular basis. She dubbed the result as "Current Engineering Literature" and regularly supplied "photostats" on request of GM domestic and overseas activities, citing

"CEL" references. She was an early holder of a photocopy deposit account with the Engineering Societies Library, New York. As engineers left the GMR staff to accompany developmental projects to Diesel divisions, for example, Miss Lutz's interloan requests continued to increase. Her Library was always the official distribution point for the formal GMR Laboratory research reports and the custodian of all laboratory notebooks. She ignored casual management suggestions that the GM Divisions pay for the literature services she provided them.

A major event was the move of the GMR Library to the new General Motors Technical Center, Warren, Michigan (about 10 miles from the earlier scattered locations of the GMR facilities in Detroit) in 1955. The Erro Saarinen-designed Center and the physical facilities of the Library have been described earlier.[1] Miss Lutz retired on July 1, 1956 after 33 years as GM Research Laboratories Librarian and she was succeeded by this author with the title of Department Head, Library Department, GMR.

Caroline W. Lutz continues to live in retirement in her apartment in Royal Oak, Michigan. She did not choose to cooperate in the preparation of this article as "It all happened so long ago and should be forgotten." (Obviously some persons thought otherwise.)

Now to HOPE THOMAS (later, ARMOUR) who devoted her special library life to the federal civil service, and specifically the US Air Force and its antecedents. It all began on July 16, 1919 when Hope Thomas was hired for a one year assignment as Index and Catalog Clerk at the fledgling McCook Field Library, Army Air Service, Dayton. The experimental activities at this particular location were an outgrowth of the Wright brothers' work on lands now partly covered by the waters of Huffman Dam (built to prevent a

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1. Eugene B. Jackson, "Enter at Your Own Risk," Library Journal 82 (May 1, 1957): 1146-51.

recurrence of the floods mentioned earlier in this article).

Miss Thomas was to work with the technical reports only, but she was faced with a large backlog of such reports from other Army Air Service locations sent by the Washington Headquarters. She had to develop a new classification and subject heading system to replace the inadequate ones that earlier sufficed for much smaller collections. She must have performed satisfactorily as Index and Catalog Clerk as she was promoted to Library Assistant on July 1, 1928. Before this, in April 1927, McCook Field was "winding down" and the library was moved to Wright Field, Building 11--in the midst of the engineering laboratories. Aeronautical enthusiasts would recognize the names of some early library patrons there: Dr. Ezra Kotcher, Lt. Albert Hegenberger, and Dr. Samuel Burka. On the other hand, readers of this paper would recognize the names of Captain George Goddard of rocket fame, and Lts. "Hap" Arnold and "Jimmy" Doolittle. (By 1935, the Library had been moved to its current home in Building 12 where Miss Thomas and successors found telephone calls somewhat impeded by the proximity of the end of the flight-test run-way, the mainline of the New York Central Railroad, and the four-lane highway linking Dayton and Columbus. There was some feeling that this Library could win any decibel contest!)

Miss Thomas had been promoted to Library Assistant on July 1, 1928 and Martha Fitzgerald (later, Yowler) became associated with the Library and her in 1937. The two worked with the increasing flood of research and engineering technical reports until they totaled about 140,000 at Miss Thomas' death in 1948.

To continue in sequential order--Hope Thomas was promoted to Principal Library Assistant, June 12, 1941, to Head Library Assistant on September 1, 1942,

to Assistant Librarian, September 19, 1943, and her title became Librarian, April 1, 1944. Lt. Joe Kraus (presently Director of Libraries, Illinois State University, Normal) was fortunate to have his professional background recognized, and he was assigned to Wright Field on May 25, 1945. He reports that he was concerned solely with the books and periodicals of WFRL during this time but was aware of the dedicated work with technical reports being done by Miss Thomas on the floor above. He was transferred out of Wright Field on January 25, 1946. This author then became Librarian, Wright Field Reference Library and Chief, Library Section, Air Documents Division, Intelligence, T-2, Air Materiel Command, AAF (later, USAF; still later, Central Air Documents Office, Army-Navy-Air Force). With the cooperation of her immediate supervisor, the late Mildred Oelke, a formal commendation procedure was instituted leading to the issuance of the commendatory letter on July 23, 1947 by Lt. Col. A. A. Arnhym, ADD Commanding Officer. Shortly thereafter she married Robert Armour of Dayton. She appeared completely happy and was noticeably more malleable in responding to changing procedures and requirements placed on her Unit. Unfortunately complications arising from a crushed kneecap in an automobile accident led to her death on September 18, 1948 at age 55. Martha Fitzgerald continued the work with documents until her own retirement.

Now considering the career of the third of the trio, Miss EMMA WEDENBINE, we revert to the story of the National Cash Register Company Library (NCR) where the personal involvement in CMR and Wright Field is replaced by information supplied by NCR house organs and by the subject herself.

The NCR Chronology mentioned earlier covers the Library's origin in 1893 by Col. Patterson, the establishment of a substation of the local

public library within a year later, the inauguration of "traveling libraries" or book carts in 1898, sent to the work stations so that workers could select books to take home, the move from the "House of Usefulness" to Building 1 to Building 10, Miss Caroline Lutz's association with it beginning 1917 as Assistant Librarian.

A new University of Dayton graduate, Emma Wedenbine joined the Library as a Clerk-Typist in 1922 and later advanced to Assistant Librarian on Miss Lutz's recommendation.

NCR was not immune to the Great Depression and the entire library staff was laid off around 1930. Education Staff people took on Library tasks as additional duties. In 1934 the Employment Head of the Women's Department asked Emma Wedenbine to become Librarian. She instituted fines of one cent per day for overdue books, reassembled her collection, and reinstituted Library services in earnest. She attempted to serve all needs both of the company and of the employees. For the latter, great efforts were made to supply current and accurate travel folders and maps plus the best current reading. Much was made of holiday seasons--such as Christmas--to keep the Library in the eyes of the employees.

Shortly after this author joined the Wright Field Reference Library, Miss Thomas insured that the opportunity to meet Miss Wedenbine arose. Subsequently, there were exchange visits, discussions of Special Libraries Association's Cincinnati Chapter projects, and other chances to interact.

By 1951, the technical information needs at NCR had increased to such a point that a Technical Library staffed by the Specifications and Services Department was set up in the Research and Development Building. That same year, Helen Rolfe (later, Strachan) became Assistant Librarian.

The NCR Library continued a broad spectrum of special library activities through the time of Emma Wedenbine's retirement on October 1, 1964. Helen Rolfe became the head NCR Librarian and that same year helped found the new Dayton Chapter of SLA and held all the Chapter offices in turn. As Helen Strachan she continued to head the NCR Library until her own retirement in February, 1972, fostering the motto "Customer Satisfaction is our No. 1 Priority." Mrs. Lois Caverlee holds the NCR Librarian post at present.

For much of the time since 1964, Emma Wedenbine has lived in the Bethany Lutheran Village, Dayton, and in the recent past has been persuaded to organize a library for that Village. It is gradually taking shape as yet another very special library for her...

We have seen how the careers of these three pioneer women special librarians originated and intertwined in Dayton. In keeping the dates and events in order to prepare this article, a detailed chronology was prepared as mentioned earlier, and conflicts resolved by consulting contemporaries wherever possible. The resulting effort seemed useful in sketching the evolution of the institutions with which these persons were involved, and permitted more space to consider them as individuals. (It may be that the chronology device so effectively used in sociology, for example, is underutilized in library literature. Accordingly, we are gratified that the Chronology for the NCR, GMR, and WFRL Libraries is included on pages _____ to _____ as an integral part of this article.)

It is instructive to review how Caroline Lutz, Hope Thomas, and Emma Wedenbine were similar and how they differed. Their careers covered the period from World War I (or shortly thereafter) through World War II, and up to a decade or more thereafter. Contemporary special librarians

launched during this time span include the late Marian Manley (later, Winser), who headed the Newark, N. J. Business Library from 1926 to 1954 and was an editor of Special Libraries;[2] the late Margaret M. Muller who

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2. Ruth von Roeschlaub, "In Memoriam, Marian Manley Winser" Special Libraries 68 (November 1977): 414.

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headed the Office of Aeronautical Intelligence, U.S. National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, Washington, D. C., from 1915 to 1950, when she was succeeded by this author (Miss Muller thus was like Miss Thomas in being a civil servant working largely with aeronautical technical reports); and Mrs. Rachel McDonald, who was selected by Henry Ford to be the Engineering Librarian for his company after she proved skilled as a teacher of square dancing to the world notables Ford habitually brought to Dearborn in the early 1920's.

While the Special Libraries article summarizes Marian Manley's contributions well and the superior Ford Motor Company archives program will insure that Rachel McDonald's contributions may be readily traced, the same is not true for the staffer at the government's civilian aeronautical research activity--Miss Muller. In fact, Robert E. Littell, who joined the only two other engineers on the NACA Washington staff in 1939, reveals that the NACA officialdom resisted specific suggestions from President Truman that they write an administrative history of the then 40 year old agency (now succeeded by NASA).

As the junior technical person, Littell had the assignment of answering the queries from other agencies, industry and the academic areas that

Miss Muller's staff could not handle. He still remembers Miss Muller appreciatively for her service orientation, insistence on research reports of the very highest standards editorially, and persistence in dealing with an uncooperative Government Printing Office--an entity not as accustomed to research reports in the early WWII period as they are today.

Personally, Miss Muller was "very pleasant, capable, and an unflappable type of person... She was always neat appearing and hired college students that met her image every summer to help file cards and fill the ever increasing requests for information."[3] At about the time of her retirement

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3. Robert E. Littell to the author [21 November 1977].

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in 1950, increases in order of magnitude of numbers of NACA reports, of potential authors, and of government contractors made inevitable rethinking of report procedures through the new Division of Research Information under E. Eugene Miller, who was always careful to acknowledge the contributions and dedication of Margaret M. Muller to her collection and its users.

Returning to considering our "three grande dames"--Lutz, Thomas, and Wedenbine were towers of dedication and loyalty to their respective institutions and the collections they so painstakingly built up over decades. They weathered the adversities of reporting to managements who, while sympathetic to the libraries' intentions, had higher priorities elsewhere in meeting objectives. This persistent feeling of not being completely understood by management exists also in today's special library managers--although the latter begin from a higher average awareness of the importance

of information than existed in the decades when the three careers were being forged. Further each of our subjects had to go through the trauma of the Great Depression with its suspension of job openings, pay raises, or adequate replacement of worn-out equipment, and such other considerations that made "just existing" a minor triumph.

It was not to be wondered that on occasion these women were found to be somewhat hard to approach by junior patrons coming on in the expansionist wartime or post-WW II period--in part because these librarians had had to develop rather firm points-of-view and strict policies of operation to make do with minimum staffs they had available over the years.

Yet these same women did not "smother" their own staffs, as is shown in the NCR case by the series of "home-grown" supervisors (Wedenbine being succeeded by Rolfe (later, Strachan), and she in turn by Caverlee), and in the other two cases where this author "inherited" certain very capable and dedicated juniors.

Standard procedures in cataloging, classification, and dissemination tools were far less visible in the 1920's and 1930's than today yet each developed workable systems and were consulted by others in the Dayton area and elsewhere on how to handle laboratory notebooks, photos, and other non-monographic literature.

Greater depth of analysis of materials was practiced by these women than usual for the day. (Wright Field analytics on airfoils were legendary in thoroughness.) An illustration of their breadth is the inclusion of general reading by both Wedenbine and Lutz and with the former seeing also a need to preserve the history of the community as well as of her own firm.

Both stood ready to help patrons who were continuing their own formal education, especially when under company auspices, or related to job function.

Wedenbine inherited a collection of materials on administration and marketing originating in the 1890's and benefitted from an innovative climate traditional with NCR from its founding. She gave greater emphasis to the general reading needs of her "members" than did predecessors and forsaw the need for a complementary collection of technical materials and encouraged its establishment. She left a better, stronger library than she acquired in 1934.

Lutz not only shared the thorough NCR indoctrination of Wedenbine but went on to the even more innovative atmosphere surrounding anything Charles F. Kettering touched or breathed upon. "Boss Ket" had contributed his flavor to the NCR atmosphere before starting his other ventures mentioned in the Chronology as preceding the GMR Laboratories. Accordingly, Lutz had no choice but to be innovative and results-orientated in her actions and program. Perhaps her inauguration of the Current Engineering Literature and her insistence that the GMR Library be of assistance to GM employees irrespective of their location or Division are the things of which she must be most proud, a half-century later.

Thomas began as a girl working on the type of technical reports that special librarians generally did not encounter until post-WWII years. She received a suggested framework from the Washington headquarters that she elaborated upon and applied thoroughly. She was visited by other aeronautical librarians in the government and in contractor firms and their own ultimate procedures were influenced thereby.

While, as the Chronology shows, the reports collection she devoted her working life to is now in "active storage" at the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, it is asserted that present day reports documentation services such as Defense Documentation Center and NASA itself owe a debt to the dedicated civil service in pioneer aeronautical information centers such as those run by Muller in Washington and by Thomas "in the field"--in this case, Dayton.

Special Librarianship in the Dayton, Mid-West, and the nation was enriched by the personal contributions and programs for user services fostered by Caroline Lutz, Hope Thomas, and Emma Wedenbine. Perhaps this article will help preserve their contributions for the information of posterity. Further, young women initiates into our profession searching for role models might consider the attributes shown by these Daytonites as worthy of their emulation. If so, this effort was worthwhile.

CHRONOLOGY

(For the Editor: Suggest this could be placed sideways on the page. Copies attached are eleven inches wide, a version of legal-width pages also exists; while the original is 21 3/4 inches by 8 feet.)

Additional sources for the Chronology:

National Cash Register Library:

1. "Library Lures Technicians, Poetry Lovers," Journal Herald (Dayton), 12 April 1954.

2. H. Eugene Kneiss, Manager, Patent and Historical Services, NCR Corporation, Dayton, telephone conversations with author, August and September 1977.

General Motors Research Laboratories Library:

3. Lab Notes (GM Research Laboratories) 13 (June 1956) 8-10.

4. Charles F. Kettering, interviews by the author, 1957.

5. T. A. Boyd, Professional Amateur, the Biography of Charles Franklin Kettering (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1957) 242p.

6. Dorothy J. Forman to the author, 2 August 1977.

7. John M. Campbell to the author, 17 August 1977.

8. Thomas C. Van Degrift to the author, 4 September 1977.

9. Harry T. Buttorf, Senior Personnel Administrator, GM Research Laboratories, to the author, 13 September 1977.

10. T. A. Boyd, Origin and Evolution of the GM Research Laboratories, presented at meeting of 25-Year Club, 20 October 1977, 6 p., typescript.

Wright Field Reference Library

11. Lt. Col. A. A. Arnhym, Commander, Air Documents Division, Intelligence, T-2, Air Materiel Command, USAF - Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio, to Hope Thomas, 23 July 1947.

12. _____, Memorandum #21, 23 July 1947, Commendation to Miss Hope Thomas.

13. Mildred Oelke, Chief, Catalog and Order Branch, Entry Section, Air Documents Division, Report of Efficiency Rating for Hope Thomas for Period 4-1-47 to 3-31-48, 27 April 1948.

14. U. S. Defense Documentation Center, DDC: Origins and Milestones, Cameron Station, Alexandria, Virginia, 197[4], 28 p., typescript.

15. Hubert E. Sauter, Administrator, Defense Documentation Center, to the author, 4 November 1977.

EPILOGUE - ON METHODOLOGY

It is clear that the full contributions of the generation of industrial and governmental special librarians who flourished between the two World Wars are to be inadequately appreciated by their successors in the computer-centered information services of today, and the next decades unless concentrated efforts are mounted to preserve the records of their accomplishments. Unfortunately many of these persons were self-taught on-the-job women professionals who were more adept at doing than at writing about it.

Danger signs raising our concern include: a) testimony of contemporaries is disappearing (some of our sources for this article are approaching 90 years of age); b) imperfect records management programs coupled with rapidly increasing storage costs means that tons of "worthless old records" are being shredded or salvaged, or c) the current litigation fever involving astronomical sums of money leads organizations to save tons of everything, including waste paper, so the "needles" get buried even further into the "haystacks" d) the existence of wide-spread worship of the latest and reluctance to determine if it all has been done before.

If interest in special library history is aroused, then the task of these writers would be simplified if a procedure were outlined for their consideration, and possible improvement.

STEP 1 - Start with an individual or institution known to you personally or to an individual you identify with very closely.

STEP 2 - Inventory the available information sources (individuals with personal knowledge, extant articles in the library and institutional literature--

not forgetting the commissioned histories typically issued at 25, 50, 75, or 100 year anniversaries of institutions) emphasizing special materials characteristic of the institutions.

STEP 3 - Explore leads in the above sources to uncover previously unknown information sources.

STEP 4 - Motivate those capable of recording, organizing, and/or investigating the past to do so, informing you of roadblocks and blind alleys.

STEP 5 - Collate the significant events and personalities, resolving discrepancies, and prepare the chronology.

STEP 6 - Write the narrative in such a way that the individuals/institutions seemed to have truly breathed and/or served in a manner worthy of recording.

While the above procedure may be well known to the usual library historian, it seems the "secret ingredients" the special librarian is uniquely qualified to bring to bear on the task is their universal belief that it is the people they know who are the key ingredients toward a task's ultimate solution. This article on "Three Grande Dames" was made possible by the cooperation of all the letter writers cited in it--just as a potential article on the contributions of the Navy's Women Officers--the WAVES--to Librarianship seems doomed to failure through disinterest in this section of the library population.

This author is willing to serve as an unofficial "clearinghouse" of special library-related library histories in progress, if a felt need exists for same. Functions of such an activity could include maintenance of a master chronology linking the several histories completed or in progress,

and suggesting potential candidates for historical treatment (such as the regional groups--Wilmington-area chemical librarians, San Diego-area Navy librarians, Wall Street brokerage house librarians--or the agency groups, Federal Reserve Bank librarians, General Electric Company librarians, USIA librarians, and potentially other individuals identified as not quite meeting the editors' criteria for the new Dictionary of American Library Biography, or similar works.

It will be equally disappointing if the reaction to this clearinghouse proposal on special library history were so clamorous as to be impracticable for volunteer effort to handle, or would turn out to be only a mirage.